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Author(s): Vincent McNabb

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THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE 'ANCREN RIWLE.'

THE object of this paper is to prove that (1) the *Ancren Riwe* was written by an English Dominican Friar and (2) this English Dominican Friar was probably Friar Robert Bacon, O.P.

I

THE 'ANCREN RIWLE' WAS WRITTEN BY AN ENGLISH
DOMINICAN FRIAR

(1) J. B. Dalgairns, with true historical insight, wrote in 1870: 'The only thing that is certain is that it was written by a Dominican; for the list of prayers which the writer enumerates as having been in use among the lay brethren of his Order are nearly identical with those ordered in the Rule of St Dominic¹.'

(2) As the Dominicans [or Friar Preachers] followed the Rule of St Augustine, which they supplemented by Constitutions divided into two Distinctions, it is at once significant that the *Ancren Riwe* is undoubtedly on the lines of the Rule of St Augustine.

(a) It begins, like the rule of St Augustine, with charity and the regulation of the heart (p. 3)².

(b) It quotes from St Augustine's Rule: 'Nothing must be sought contrary to the rule of the supreme authority' (p. 5).

Again, 'An immodest rule is the messenger of an unchaste heart' (p. 61).

Again, 'Augustine putteth both these in one balance—to desire and to wish to be desired' (p. 61).

¹ *The Scale of Perfection* by Walter Hilton, London, John Philp, 1870. Introductory Essay by J. B. Dalgairns, p. xii.

² The references are to Morton's Edition: *The Ancren Riwe* by James Morton, London, The Camden Society, 1853.

(c) St Augustine's Rule was almost unique in allowing the use of the bath. 'Lavacrum etiam corpori cum infirmitatis necessitas cogit minime denegetur.'

The *A. R.* says: 'Wash yourselves whenever it is necessary, as often as ye please' (p. 423).

(d) The close of the *Riwle* from pp. 425 to 431 is little less than a simple commentary and adaptation of the closing paragraphs of St Augustine's Rule. The parallels are so many that we have not space to set them down. They include the command to read the Rule once a week.

(e) It may be added that the only other great western Rule was that of St Benedict. But already there had been a 'Regula Inclusarum' (Anchoresses' Rule) by the Benedictine (i.e. Cistercian) St Aelred. The *A. R.* quotes from it.

(3) The correspondences with the Dominican Rule are manifold.

(a) To take the point acutely detected by Dalgairns. The *A. R.* says 'Our lay-brethren say thus their hours; for Uhtsong (Matins) on werke-days (i.e. ferial days) eight and twenty Pater Nosters; on holy-days (feast days) forty; for even-song, fifteen; for every other time, seven. Before Matins PATER CREDO: kneeling on ferial days and bowing on feast days' (pp. 24, 25). Morton's translation is not quite accurate here; he evidently did not understand or detect the technical phrases.

Let us now contrast this with the office ordered for the Dominican lay-brothers.

<i>Ancoren Riwle</i> (our lay-brothers)		Dominican lay-brothers
Matins	{ Ferial Days 28	28
	{ Feast Days 40	40
Vespers	15	14
Little hours	7	7

It is quite easy to verify the fact that the only (1) lay-brethren, (2) following the Rule of St Augustine, and (3) saying this office were Dominican lay-brothers. As neither Richard Poore or Simon of Ghent was a follower of St Augustine's Rule or even a religious, neither of them could have written, as the author of the *A. R.* has written, 'Our lay-brothers say thus their hours.... If any of you will do this, she followeth here as in other observances much of our order, and I earnestly advise it' (pp. 25, 27).

(β) This is further confirmed: 'Ye should be as our lay-brethren are, partakers of Holy Communion only fifteen times a year' (p. 413). This was the primitive custom of the brothers of the Dominican Order (cf. *Analecta Ord. Praed.*, vol. III, Rome 1897, p. 50).

Even the days fixed are almost identical :

{ <i>A. R.</i> 1 Mid-winter	{ 2 Between Christmas and Candlemas	{ 3 Candlemas
{ <i>D. R.</i> 1 Christmas	{ 2 Epiphany	{ 3 Candlemas
{ <i>A. R.</i> 4 Mid-Lent or An- nunciation	{ 5 Holy Thursday	{ 6 Easter
{ <i>D. R.</i> 4 Between Candlemas and Easter	{ 5 Holy Thursday	{
{ <i>A. R.</i> 7 3rd Sunday after Easter	{ 8 Whitsunday	{ 9 Midsummer
{ <i>D. R.</i> 6 Between Easter and Whitsunday	{ 7 Whitsunday	{ 8 Between Whit- sunday and SS. Peter and Paul
{ <i>A. R.</i>	{ 10 S. M. Magdalen	{ 11 Assumption
{ <i>D. R.</i> 9 SS. Peter and Paul	{ 10 S. M. Magdalen	{ 11 Assumption
{ <i>A. R.</i> 12 Birth of our Lady	{ 13 S. Michael	{ 14 All Saints
{ <i>D. R.</i> 12 Birth of our Lady	{ 13 S. Denis	{ 14 All Saints
{ <i>A. R.</i> 15 S. Andrew		
{ <i>D. R.</i> 15 S. Andrew		

It may be remarked that the English tone of the writer of the *A. R.* is manifested in the substitution of St Michael for St Denis, the Patron of France. In anticipation we may remark that Robert Bacon was one of the leaders against the Angevins.

Again, St Mary Magdalen, who is singled out amongst the women saints, was a patroness of the Dominican Order.

(γ) The writer insists that the Rule shall not bind under vow or sin (pp. 7-9 ; 413). Now St Dominic had probably been the pioneer in this movement amongst the religious orders.

(δ) The 'minutio' or blood-letting, four times a year (p. 423).

(ε) The blessing of any drink taken between meals (p. 35).

(ζ) The rule is divided into Distinctions (p. 13). The Second Master-General of the Dominican Order, Jordan of Saxony, divided the Constitutions into two Distinctions¹. In 1229 he visited Oxford.

(η) The anchoress is told to say office thus: 'At the one psalm you shall stand, if you are at ease, and at the other sit; and always rise up at the Gloria Patri and bow;.... At Placebo you may sit until the Magnificat' (pp. 21, 23). These are the very rubrics still obtaining in the Dominican liturgy.

(θ) The prayers to the Blessed Virgin given on pages 38-40, were so commonly used by Jordan of Saxony, the Second Master-General, that he was looked upon as their author. The psalms used form an

¹ *Analecta Ord. Praed.*, vol. II, p. 35.

acrostic: **M**agnificat, **A**d Dominum, **R**etribue, **I**n convertendo, **A**d te levavi (**MARIA**).

(ι) The phrase 'Make your venia,' i.e. prostrate yourself on the ground, is a technical phrase still daily used by Dominicans (p. 47).

(κ) The habit of the anchoress is black and white, i.e. the Dominican colours. 'The black cross is proper to those who are doing penance.... The white cross is appropriate to purity' (p. 51).

Moreover, 'Answer ye any one who asks you concerning your order, whether white or black, say ye are both...and of the order of St James' (p. 11). The Dominicans were called Jacobites from their famous Convent of S. Jacques [James] at Paris.

(λ) The Corpus Christi (Cambridge) MS. contains some further confirmations. I quote from the scholarly article in this Review¹ by its late lamented English Editor, Mr G. C. Macaulay.

f. 16 v°. 'Our friar-preachers and our friars minors,' i.e. our Dominicans and Franciscans. These two mendicant orders were joined in special bonds of friendship. The writer belongs to one of the two. But nowhere in the Rule is there the slightest trace of a Franciscan origin.

Again to quote the collator's remarks²: 'We note the desire of the writer to bring all the communities of anchoresses in England under one rule so that the separate societies of London, Oxford, Shrewsbury and Chester may be all as one convent' (p. 463). It is remarkable that the author of the *A. R.* here enumerates four of the earliest communities of friar-preachers in England. He places London first as it was the capital. The other three are enumerated in their order of foundation, Oxford (1221), Shrewsbury (1230), Chester (1235).

Note that Oxford is especially mentioned.

Shrewsbury and Chester were founded by Alexander de Stevensby (Stavensby), Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, one of the most remarkable prelates of England at that time. He had taught the first group of Dominicans, and St Dominic himself in 1214. In 1224 he was consecrated Bishop of Lichfield by the Pope himself Gregory IX. In 1227 when there was a property dispute at Oxford between the friars and the canons of St Frideswide he was appointed delegate of the Pope to decide the matter.

In this same passage from the Corpus Christi MS. we have the sentence: 'If anyone is among you that goeth in singularity and followeth not the convent, but goeth out of the flock that is as in a

¹ Vol. ix, p. 467.

² *Ibid.* p. 463.

cloister over which Jesus Christ is high prior¹. It is to be noted that in this paragraph which speaks of convents, the writer uses not the word 'Guardian' which is Franciscan but the word 'Prior,' which is Dominican.

Again in fol. 112 v^{o2} we have, 'Let no man eat before you but by your master's leave, general or special, as of friars-preachers and minors special of all others.'

Here again the friar-preachers and friar-minors are singled out. Hospitality is to be given to them especially. This was the rule of the friar-preachers.

II

THE 'ANCREN RIWLE' WAS WRITTEN BY FRIAR ROBERT BACON, O.P.

1. Wood³ calls Robert Bacon the first Dominican writer in England. He was born towards the year 1170 and died in 1248.

2. It is clear from the *A. R.* that the writer was an English Friar-Preacher or Dominican. This makes the number of claimants to the authorship very few. It is clear that the author is a man of outstanding literary and theological power; as was Friar Robert Bacon. He was the first Dominican who lectured at Oxford. Even Matthew Paris, no enthusiast for the friars, rises to superlatives in describing Robert Bacon.

3. The Rule has always been associated with Salisbury diocese. It is thought that Friar Robert Bacon succeeded Edmund Rich as Treasurer of Salisbury.

4. The original dialect of the English text is South-Western⁴. The birth-place of the famous Friar Roger Bacon, Franciscan, and nephew of Robert Bacon, was Somersetshire. It is not unlikely that uncle and nephew belonged to the same county; which is typically South-Western.

5. The writer shows a sturdy love for his own country. Is not the *Riwle*, in the vulgar tongue, almost a unique product of the thirteenth century? Robert Bacon was a famous and unconquerable opponent of the Poitevins. It was he who had the courage to preach his mind

¹ *Mod. Lang. Review*, p. 470.

² *Ibid.*, p. 471.

³ *Annals*, I, p. 192.

⁴ Mr Macaulay wrote to me: 'The original dialect of the English text was S. Western with a tinge of Midland. This was a kind of standard literary language at one time. See the Lives of St Juliana, St Katherine, etc.'

before Henry III at Oxford. His witticism on that occasion is amongst the best known stories of the thirteenth century. He would be consistently loyal in substituting the feast of St Michael for that of St Denis.

6. The writer belonged to that group of clerics like St Edmund of Canterbury and St Richard of Chichester, his friends both, who were interesting themselves in the religious life of women. St Edmund's famous *Mirror* was written for religious women. Robert Bacon was so closely united with St Edmund that the University of Oxford rested on his witness when it drew up a letter asking the Pope to canonise St Edmund. Innocent appointed Robert Bacon one of the three English clerics to prepare the matter for St Edmund's canonisation, and he wrote what is probably the most valuable life of St Edmund.

7. The author of the *A. R.* shows such a devotion to Jordan of Saxony, Master-General of the Dominicans, who was at Oxford in 1229 and 1230, that he spreads a devotion formed or fostered by Jordan. Now Jordan was at that very time especially occupied in fostering the religious life of women.

8. The author of the *A. R.* is curiously anxious to give the meaning of Hebrew proper names. He seems to be acquainted with Hebrew—a strange accomplishment in the England of the thirteenth century. But Robert Bacon was head of the Dominican hostel for Jews at Oxford. In 1241–2 the sheriff was ordered to pay him 40 shillings for clothing for these Jews. In 1245 the sheriff was to find out from him the whereabouts of an apostate Jew.

9. These points of evidence if circumstantial are convergent and convincing.

But there is one point that seems to make the authorship of Robert Bacon historically certain. The passage in the *Ancren Riivle* is:

(a) Ich wot swulne þet bereð boðe togedere

(1) hevi brunie

(2) and here

(3) ibunden mid iren þe middel þauh

(4) and ermes mid brode þicke bendes

Ich wot ec swuche wummon þet þoleð lute less (p. 382).

We have here (1) a CUIRASS, (2) a HAIR-SHIRT, (3) an IRON or METAL instrument, (4) BANDS. Further mention is made of a WOMAN.

This is a sufficiently remarkable passage, and all the more striking because it is the only personal anecdote in the whole Rule.

Now it is a still more remarkable fact that in the MS. life of

St Edmund of Canterbury which Wallace convincingly proves to have been written by Robert Bacon, O.P., a parallel passage occurs :

A military CUIRASS, armed with which his mother often withstood the wiles of the tempter and the uprisings of the flesh, he too bore under his clothes, in order to bring the like conflicts to a like end....During Lent and Advent...he had a HAIR-SHIRT such as the world had not seen....Moreover he BOUND the upper part of this hair-shirt with a thick three-fold BAND (funiculo grossiori et triplici)....Very often he put on a LEADEN scapular of great weight and discomfort¹.

Of St Edmund's mother Robert Bacon writes: 'She wore a heavy and cold CUIRASS under her gown; and a rough and painful HAIR-SHIRT under the cuirass' (p. 591). Moreover when her two sons were studying at Oxford 'She sent them two HAIR-SHIRTS' (p. 594).

The St John's MS. devotes an entire chapter to these instruments of St Edmund's penance.

(b) Wallace also prints a life of St Edmund by the monk Eustace. It is significant that this MS., whilst speaking of St Edmund's bodily penance mentions the HAIR-SHIRT, and not the CUIRASS. But he gives the witness of Robert Bacon; and therein is to be found a mention of (1) the CUIRASS, (2) HAIR-SHIRT, (3) BANDS, (4) LEADEN SCAPULAR (p. 561).

These identifications, so minute and detailed, would seem to make it historically probable—or certain?—that the *Ancren Riwele* was written by Friar Robert Bacon, O.P., the student friend, and biographer of St Edmund of Canterbury.

P.S.—As this article impugns, at least implicitly, the conclusion arrived at by the late Mr Macaulay² that the English text of the *A. R.* is a translation of the French, I should like to add that, from first hearing of my view, he was greatly interested in it. He wrote to me on May 9, 1915:

With regard to your paper on the authorship of the *Ancren Riwele* I may tell you I have looked into the question of the other works of Robert Bacon existing in MS. and have found at present the treatise (so-called) *Super Psalterium* (a series of sermons on texts from the Psalms) in the Bodleian Library, and three discourses on the Rogation Days in the British Museum. The former of these works is a rather extensive collection and I have not been able to examine it very far at present, but I hope to do so before long: the latter I have read. The result in my mind is not on the whole unfavourable to his claims, and I have found one rather remarkable parallel, namely the curious etymological reflections on the names of Judith and Holofernes which occur in the *A. R.*, p. 136. If you do not object, I should like to write a short appendix to your article on this part of the subject, which interests me much.

¹ *Life of St Edmund of Canterbury*, London, 1893, p. 602.

² *Modern Language Review*, ix, p. 65.

Mr Macaulay in the last fortnight of his life visited Oxford again and searched the *Super Psalterium* for any light it might throw on the authorship of the *A. R.* He did not, I understand, find anything which absolutely clinched the matter to his mind, but he still found nothing to overthrow my theory. It is a matter of regret that the notes he made about this investigation are not forthcoming, and still more that he was not spared to add the appendix to my article which he had contemplated.

VINCENT McNABB, O.P.

HAWKESYARD PRIORY, RUGELEY.